

10 February 2012

Dear Parent/Carer

### **REVIEW DAY**

Thank you to all of you who made the effort to meet with us on Review Day this week. It is such an important opportunity to sustain the dialogue between home and school, giving us the opportunity to reflect on what is going well, and to set targets looking ahead. We are very appreciative of all the support we received on the day. If, after reflection, there are matters which you still want to talk through, I would suggest that you contact Reception and leave a message for the member of staff you met on Review Day.

If you were unable to attend on Review Day you will shortly receive a pack of information. Once you have this, if you would like to meet to discuss it, this can be arranged through the Year Office.

We also appreciated the support we have had from families as Years 8 and 9 have made subject choices for next year; the number of parents attending the events was great, so thank you. Now is also the time that Sixth Form decisions are being made, and if you would like more support to discuss the options available, Mr Rumsey and his team will always be willing to meet with you. You can contact them on 01937 846612.

### **LITERACY SKILLS**

As a part of our ongoing drive to further improve and extend literacy skills, and in particular reading, all young people in Years 7, 8 and 9 are being given a specific cross curricular Literacy Target. The target is written on a sticker that has been placed on the front of their planner and it is specific to the individual child. If you bought a new planner on Review Day, a new sticker will be added in the next English lesson.

All teachers, not just those in English, will be supporting students in meeting their Literacy Targets in their subjects and after half term we will send you some specific support materials about how you can help your child to develop and improve their literacy skills at home; again, we appreciate your support in this.

### **HOLOCAUST REMEMBRANCE**

An important recent focus in school this week has been Holocaust Remembrance. We adopted the national theme 'Speak Up, Speak Out' using the lessons of the past to change the future. All year groups have had a powerful assembly on the themes, using the 2012 Holocaust Remembrance Day video, which focused not just on the events of the Second World War, but also on more recent events in Cambodia, Darfur and Bosnia. I am grateful to the lead shown here by Miss Sanghera and Mr Brennan.

As a part of our Personal Values programme, all of our young people made a personal 'Holocaust Pledge'; some were a straight forward individual promise, others bold, and some courageous. I was delighted that a group of Year 10s wanted to do more, so they assembled many of the pledges into a huge display on the main corridor.

### **HENRY OLONGA**

A week after our school had pledged to 'Speak up and Speak Out'; we were privileged to welcome Henry Olonga into school. Henry was the youngest cricketer ever to play Test Cricket for Zimbabwe and the first black player to do so. He came to international attention when, with the current England Cricket Coach Andy Flower, he wore a black arm band during the 2003 Cricket World Cup in protest at human rights violations and the state of democracy in Zimbabwe. The consequences of this controversial decision led to Henry having to give up cricket and live in exile in the UK.

Henry was the perfect role model for our young people, because he is someone who had the courage to both 'Speak Up and Speak Out' even though the personal cost was so high. He was a brilliant speaker, charming, warm and challenging. Considering all that he has achieved he was incredibly humble, undoubtedly a fruit of his strong Christian faith.

Henry made a huge impact on the young people and he ended his visit with a short session of cricket in the Sports Hall with our younger cricketers. It was a fantastic opportunity for young cricketers to bat against a Test Match bowler. I am grateful to Mr Coombes for securing Henry's time with us.

### **SAFER INTERNET DAY**

The safety of young people on line is very important to us, so during this week we have taken part in 'Safer Internet Day'. This is an international event in which thousands of schools from all over the world take time out to reflect on their online safety. This year's theme is 'Connecting generations and educating each other...safely'. Recent research (from 'EU Kids Online') found that 53% of parents felt that they should do more to protect their children online, and the gap between children's lives and the online world is becoming smaller every day. This was a theme developed in assemblies led by Mr Hunt where he talked about how to keep a safe distance between our private lives and the growing online community. This was followed up in our ICT lessons in work prepared by Mr Appleyard, and also in individual 'drop ins', where young people could check both their online securities and practice with Miss Large. If you would like to follow up what we have been doing in school it is on two web sites, [www.saferinternet.org](http://www.saferinternet.org) and [www.thinkuknow.co.uk](http://www.thinkuknow.co.uk)

### **GOVERNOR ELECTIONS**

The recent Parent Governor election saw Mrs Claire Blakey elected and Mr Tony Wildgoose re-elected to our Governing Body. We are grateful for the strategic role played by all of our Governors.

One notable event this term was the annual Governors meeting with young people, where Governors gain the opportunity to hear the student voice direct. It was a very valuable evening for all.

### **UNIFORM**

Once again I would like to thank you for your support. We have in the last week, with attention to safety in the snow, slush and ice, allowed a wider range of footwear than we would in usual circumstances. Unless we have new lying snow on the ground, we will revert to the shoe guidance on the school's website from Monday 20 February 2012.

### **SNOW**

I was pleased that we were able to retain school being open despite the snow; it is always my default position to keep school open. It is only when I am unable to secure the safety of the site or our school community do I consider closure. If we were to close, notification is sent out by text or would appear on our school web site. If there are no messages, then we are open as usual!

### **HALF TERM**

Half term begins today, although for some of our staff there will be little rest, as we have educational visits to Holland with the Art Team, Spain with Modern Foreign Languages and Austria with PE. I look forward to hearing of their success, and I know the young people involved will be appreciative of the commitment of the staff leading them.

I hope that the half term break is a great one for you and your family, and school reopens at the usual time on Monday 20 February 2012.

Yours faithfully

CHRISTOPHER WALSH  
Headteacher